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ABSTRACT

While the largest growth in the college-age population (i.e., 18 to 24 year olds) is among minority group members, the largest decline in college-going rates is among minorities. Because of poor academic preparation, rising tuition rates, and declining financial aid resources, the community college has become the college of necessity, rather than the college of choice, for most minority students. It is the duty of community colleges to recognize the importance of their mission to provide quality education to their minority and disadvantaged population to enable them to become skilled and productive members of society. It is the duty of trustees, presidents, and faculties to accomplish these goals by exercising leadership, creativity, and innovativeness; by taking risks; and by providing the necessary resources. While studies show that currently community colleges are not meeting their obligation to minority students, certain states and institutions are serving as excellent models. A comprehensive plan for minority recruitment and retention has been initiated in New Jersey, involving financial aid packages, high school outreach programs, equal opportunity programs, a strong database to track student progress, grant funding of creative minority programs at four-year colleges, a minority doctoral loan forgiveness plan, and increased funding for remedial and compensatory education. In New York, LaGuardia Community College and Bronx Community College have instituted entire programs to increase minority retention and success. All of these programs have features in common, including creative leadership, systematic planning, increased resources, and sustained effort. (EJV)

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MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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Washington, D.C.

Illinois Community College Trustees Association

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Springfield, Illinois

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American Council on
Education

June 13, 1986

Illinois Community College Trustees Association
ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET

I'm beginning to think of Illinois as a second home. This is my fourth trip to your state so far this year and the year is only half over! I was here in March for the Eastern Illinois University - Affirmative Action Awards Recognition Program. I was here again in May at Southern Illinois University for the ICBCHE Annual Meeting (which I have attended each year since the organization was originally founded.) Now, I am here again in June for this ICCTA Awards Banquet and I am very pleased to be here.

Coming to Illinois so often, and to other states, not just this year, but over the past several years, I have watched the developing realization by people of the magnitude of a national problem of major crisis to our country, and that is the declining participation of minorities in higher education and the worsening of black and Hispanic educational

achievement. In 1984 for example while attending an educational conference in Indiana, I heard a state educational official speak of the minority decline in Indiana as perhaps a temporary aberration since minority students were probably going to Illinois or other neighboring states for their college education. In Illinois, of course, some suggested they were going to Indiana. In New Jersey, education officials thought minorities were going to New York and Pennsylvania. And in New York they guessed they were going into the Army!

Now there is a germ of truth in all of those perceptions, but it is necessary to finally put these misconceptions to rest before we can deal with the seriousness of minority decline:

- It is true that some students do leave the state to go to school elsewhere
- It is true that some students go to Historically Black Colleges rather than to Predominantly White Institutions
- it is true that some minority students do go into the military rather than to college (in fact nearly 1/3 of the armed forces now are minority)

But it is more importantly true that there is an absolute decline nationally in minority participation in higher

education. While whites declined only slightly between 1 & 2%, blacks between 1976 & 1982, declined 11%; Hispanics during the same period declined 16%. And enrollment in the Historically Black Colleges declined by over 10%. And the decline overall continues today. When that decline is compared to minority group growth rates the situation that reveals itself is even more serious. For example, in 1982, immigration to the United States was 40% Asian, 43% Hispanic, 3% African and Carribean and only 8% white European. Now compound those figures with differential birth rates: whites have 1.7 babies per fertile female, blacks 2.4 and Hispanics 2.7. It takes 2.1 babies per female just to replace a group's population. Whites are both aging and declining proportionately in numbers. Its not just that minorities are "having all those babies" as the popular press and welfare workers like to say, its that white women are not having many babies. During the baby boom of 1945 to 1959, the white birthrate was 3.0 per female - thats where the baby boom came from. Now, by the year 2000, due to a combination of immigration and high birth rates, 1/3 of U.S. population will be minority. It is 21% already now.

That means that the largest growth in the college age population, that is 18-24 year olds, is minority; yet at the same time, the largest decline in college-going is among minorities. That is serious. The college age class of 1990 has already been born. Most of them are in school now. A

large number of them are minority. If they don't go to college, we and they are in trouble. That is serious.

What do these facts and numbers mean? Obviously they mean several things - some positive, some negative. Let's look at some of the positive ones first:

- one of the meanings of these facts is that we as a nation have for the first time the unique opportunity to achieve equity for minorities in education and in the economy if for no other reason than simply that the numbers are there.

- during the next generation even the term minority will become nearly obsolete.

- these facts mean that the nation's colleges and universities must increasingly look to minority students to fill its seats and keep its professors employed.

- these facts mean that by the year 2000, 1/3 of the workforce will be minority if they are educated and employed.

Now what are some of the negative meanings of these facts:

- one meaning is that beginning in 1983, for the first time in American history, there were more people over 65 than under the age of 18. That will continue to be true for at least the lifetime of everyone in this room.

- That means that an aging white population has increasingly less interest in the quality of public schools because they don't have kids who go there.

  In 1960-only 5 of the largest 25 U.S. cities had public school systems with a majority of minority pupils.

  In 1986-all 25 of the 25 largest cities had a majority of minorities in its public schools. This is irrespective of the overall population of the city: For example, New York is majority white, but its school systems is 78% minority. Milwaukee is also majority white and its school systems is 52% minority.

- these facts mean that inner-city schools with declining financial and instructional resources are not preparing students for competitive institutions of higher education. Now both the federal government and most of the states are reducing funds for

remedial and compensatory education. It is not in your self interest to do that.

THAT IS A DIRECT PRESCRIPTION FOR EDUCATIONAL FAILURE AND ECONOMIC APARTHEID.

IT MEANS THAT WHEN THE BABY-BOOMERS START RETIRING AFTER THE YEAR 2000, THEY MAY HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT WHO PAYS THEIR SOCIAL SECURITY.

With the poor academic preparation that occurs in most inner-city schools, for most minorities, the college of necessity, rather than choice, becomes the community college. In 1980 families in poverty paid 1.7% of their income in federal taxes. In 1986 families in poverty paid 10% of their income in federal taxes. Between 1975 and 1985 college tuition increased by 95% and student grants declined from 55% to 41% of financial aid dollars. Minorities are also being priced into community colleges. Not surprisingly over 50% of blacks and Hispanics begin their education in your institutions. Indeed, the two primary gateways to educational attainment for minorities are the secondary schools and the community colleges-and in both the attrition rates are murderous, the dropout rates are high, and the educational attainment minimal.

It is the duty of community colleges to recognize the importance of their mission and their responsibility to provide quality education to their minority and disadvantaged population in order to enable them to become skilled and productive members of society. It is the duty and responsibility of trustees, of presidents and faculties to accomplish these goals by exercising leadership, creativity, by innovativeness, by taking risks and by providing the necessary resources.

We are not meeting that obligation. Less than 10% of entering minority community college students attain associate degrees; less than 3% of them transfer to four year schools; and only 1% of them succeed in attaining a BA degree. Community colleges were to be the leading institutions in solving the problem of the underrepresentation of educated minorities and poor people. They are, at the moment, part of the problem. Even for upper-achieving students-starting their education in a commmunity college lowers their chances of completing any degree. Yes that is correct. Research studies show that when students of equal ability start their education in a community college and in a four year school, the community college student is less likely to complete any degree. That reflects a bewilderment of purpose and mission and a paucity of leadership. Yes, that is a much maligned word, but leadership is what is needed to solve this major societal problem. When Lyndon Baines Johnson said at Howard

University in 1964, "We shall overcome," his charismatic, moral leadership on matters of equity electrified a nation and began a generation of reforms in educational access. Those reforms have nearly come to an end under the present administration.

James McGregor Burns, in his book on leadership said, "at the highest stage of moral development [leaders] are guided by near-universal ethical principles of justice such as equality of human rights and respect for individual dignity." James Fisher, in his book, The Power of the Presidency, calls for charismatic leadership on the part of the president to inspire the constituencies of the collegiate institution to outdo themselves in achieving the goals of the institution. Unfortunately, too few Boards of Trustees and Presidents, in these conservative times, are exercising leadership in areas of equity and social justice. Too few are inspiring constituencies of their institutions with innovative programs and strategies to address the needs of minority students. Too few faculties are prepared to change their perceptions of the "ideal" student-i.e. white, single, 18 years old and in the upper 1/2 of the class-to deal with the reality of 24 year old minorities with children and educational deficiencies, who are increasingly the "typical" student seeking entrance to our colleges. But we say in community colleges - "that's who we serve." The little secret is that we do not serve them well.

The ICCTA in concert with its presidents and their faculties-such as those being honored here tonight-has the capability, has, indeed, the duty and responsibility to rise to the challenge and exercise creative leadership in this state in providing quality higher education to its large minority population, which is growing larger in size and in its impact on the state's educational and economic resources.

In order to do so it is not necessary to reinvent the wheel. There are some, unfortunately too few, excellent models out there in the world:

For instance, New Jersey is probably the leading example, under the leadership of Governor Tom Kean, of a state putting minority education at the top of the state's agenda. Ted Hollander, the Chancellor of Higher Education in New Jersey, has developed the most comprehensive program I've seen in any state: last December he held a statewide meeting of all the presidents of public colleges in the state-both 4 year and 2 year. I was asked to give the keynote address at that meeting. Each president was required to develop a comprehensive plan to increase minority recruitment, retention and graduation at his/her institution including:

1. - financial aid packages - high school outreach (and junior high)

- remedial and compensatory programs - counseling and career guidance

- Educational Opportunity Programs

- a strong data base to track successes and failures

- and curriculum revisions in instruction

2. A competitive proposal program was initiated for 4 year schools for grants to fund the most creative minority programs. I have read all the proposals and many are outstanding.

3. That's not all: New Jersey has instituted a minority doctoral loan forgiveness plan to increase minority faculty in its state colleges and universities. Any student receiving a loan for PhD study under this program is forgiven 1/4 of that loan for each year he/she teaches in a New Jersey college.

(When I visited Eastern Illinois University & Southern Illinois University, I could immediately see a need for such a program in Illinois)

4. Finally, although New Jersey has, like other states, raised admission standards to its states colleges and universities, it has also, unlike most other states, increased remedial and compensatory proograms and improved the curriculum in high schools in order to prepare students to meet those standards.

You can also look at New York where LaGuardia Community College and Bronx Community College, both with predominantly minority student populations, have instituted entire programs to increase minority retention and success. LaGuardia, for example, developed one of the first college courses in "critical thinking" to improve students' analytical and reasoning abilities. Some students who have completed that program have now transferred to Vassar, a highly competitive college, and all of them are doing well. I evaluated that program this year and was very much impressed. At Bronx, another program I evaluated in 1985, here was a community college which 20 years ago had a student body of mostly bright Jewish students, nearly all of whom were expecting to go on to four year schools. Now here, 20 years later it was swarming with all these black and Puerto Rican kids and the faculty, still the same, 90% white and tenured, was screaming, "We don't know how to teach these people." "Very well," said President Roscoe Brown. "We'll teach you how to

teach them." And he instituted some fantastic professional development programs for his faculty that I watched people participating in with absolute enthusiam! The payoff is that students from Bronx, just like their predecessors 20 years ago, are transfering to Hunter and City College and New York University and are doing well.

In Florida, Miami-Dade Community College has made the improvement of minority retention its top priority and has developed significant programs to achieve that goal.

All of these programs have in common these features: first, an institutional commitment from the leadership, i.e. Boards and Presidents, to equity as a high priority. Second, each has developed a systematic data-gathering process to document attrition, retention, who succeeds and why they succeed. Third, each has processes for tracking students from entry to exit. Fourth, each has instituted major curriculum reform includiing such innovative courses as critical thinking, writing and listening and in test- taking skills.

These states, and a few others that I have not mentioned, are recognizing that in order to address the critical problem, it is not enough to pay lip service, but it is necessary to exercise creative leadership, systematic planning, increased resources and substained effort.

I take this opportunity tonight to challenge you in Illinois: you trustees, you presidents and other administrators, and you faculty to initiate, indeed, to become leaders in the revolution of educational equity that this country requires if it is to enter the 21st Century as a competitive, viable and democratic society. I hope you will rise to that challenge.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges

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